

Parole News

Massachusetts Parole Board

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Chairman's Column Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh

This month, I feel it is important to discuss an aspect of parole that is not often spoken about, but has a significant impact on the public safety of the Commonwealth—the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision ("ICAOS").

By way of a brief overview, the Compact has been regulating the transfer of adult probationers and parolees since 1937. Given several defects in the old compact, states initiated the current day compact, which Massachusetts joined in 2005.

The purpose of the Compact is to effectively regu-

late the transfer of adult parole and probationers across state lines. The Compact ensures proper victim notification, data collection, and coordination of information in order for both the sending and receiving state to be aware of the information about the offender in order to best serve public safety.

The true meaning of the Compact can be found in the voice of Pat Tuthill, who is an ex-officio member of the Compact. Her daughter, Peyton, was murdered by an offender who was traveling between two states and who was unsupervised. She



has dedicated her time, energy, and efforts, to improving the way that we do business to prevent another family from suffering the loss that she has sustained. She is a true hero in the field.

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Parole Staff Graduate From The Massachusetts Victim Assistance Academy

By Tom Clark

Recently, two members of the Victim Services Unit (VSU) attended the Massachusetts Victim Assistance Academy (MVAA). Stacey Pignataro of Region 4 and Erin Farrell of the Central Office graduated from the first annual MVAA conducted July 29 – August 3, 2007. The 40 hour week long intensive training was held at Endicott College in Beverly, Massachusetts.

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Parole Board's Transitional Housing Program Places 1,000 client

By Nelson Simao



Quincy Reentry Officer Anthony Scopa attended the Massachusetts Parole Board's Housing Conference along with representatives from Brooke and McGrath House.

In 2005, the Massachusetts Parole Board began placing parolees and ex-offenders in long term residential programs and sober houses under a federal VOI/TIS grant. VOI/TIS, which stands for Violent Offender Initiative/Truth in Sentencing was funding acquired to address the problem of high recidivism due to the lack of access of treatment programs.

The Commonwealth entered in a partnership with programs statewide that provide a wide range of services for Parole's s diverse population. St. Francis House in Boston, North Cottage in Norton and Harmony House in New

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Parole Staff Graduate From The Massachusetts Victim Assistance Academy

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The MVAA trained students using a victim centered curriculum involving several different disciplines. They included: Mental Health, Medical care, Criminal Justice, Victim Advocacy and Media Relations.

The MVAA curriculum reflects a new model that attempts to help victim service providers better understand the crime victims experience on three levels simultaneously across time, across discipline and across type of crime.

These training opportunities are vital to the Victim Services Unit. It allows our staff to provide the best possible services to the victims that we deal with everyday. Congratulations to Erin and Stacey for a job well done.

One issue that the VSU is turning its attention to is domestic violence. Since January 2007 there has been over 35 domestic violence related deaths in Massachusetts. That is just about one per week. With that in mind Chairman Maureen Walsh has decided that VSU Assistant Director Janice

Dean will attend the National Institute of Crime Prevention's Domestic Violence Conference. Upon her return the agency will continue to review all policies and procedures involving Domestic Violence.

"These training opportunities are vital to the Victim's Services Unit"

I also would like to recognize the hard work of the victim service coordinators who have stepped up their outreach efforts. By working with the various district attorneys' offices and community based organizations we all can help bridge the gap in services that many victims encounter.

Compas Risk and Needs Assessment Project

By Darwin Bliss & Lynn Ferraris

The Compas Risk and Needs Assessment Project is progressing positively. Pilot programs are being conducted by the Department of Correction and Parole as a part of the validation process for this tool and a normative study. We are looking towards implementing a pilot project at the Region 6 Parole Office in the very near future. The past few months have been exciting and encouraging in working towards our goal of incorporating this valuable tool into our case management process.

Staff was able to experience the use of this tool first hand in April when the Deputy Parole Supervisors from

the Transitional Services Unit administered the Compas Core Questionnaire to thirty inmates at MCI-Framingham. The feedback from the staff who administered the questionnaire was highly positive. The Department of Correction is administering the Core Compas Pilot Questionnaire at MCI Concord and MCI Framingham and reporting similarly.

On June 11th & 12th an instructor from Northpointe trained Parole

Staff on the Compas Core Questionnaire which is geared towards the risk/needs assessment of offenders while they are incarcerated.

Personnel trained included Transitional Parole Staff from every state institution, Field Officers from the Region Six Parole Office, and the Deputy Parole Supervisors of the Transitional and Field Service Units. Those participating in this training worked with the Core

Compas tool on the Northpointe web site. This exercise facilitated an exchange of information and ideas between Northpointe and Parole staff to

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"The feedback from the staff who administered the questionnaire was highly positive"

Developing Job Opportunities for Ex-Offenders

By Chris Foster

On September 27th the Massachusetts Parole Board hosted its fourth Employer Advisory Board meeting. These meetings are held quarterly to improve job opportunities for ex-offenders and to enable them to be self-sufficient members of society.

This quarter, the meeting was held at the Parole Board's Central Office in Natick. A number of employers attended including restaurants, labor industries as well as other law enforcement agencies including the United States Probation office. The Parole Board will keep the names of

the businesses that we work with confidential, this is a crucial part to our success. A result of the meeting the Massachusetts Parole Board and Division of Career Services are planning to host a web based teleconference meeting to discuss some of the major areas of focus on job placement for ex-offenders. The meeting also yielded success in its newly introduced plan for articulation agreements. These agreements are proposed understandings between a hiring company and the Parole Board. Agreements will

be on the company's terms and will demonstrate the best practices in order to aid in the hiring process of ex-offenders for that individual company. Immediately following the meeting, one of the companies asked to develop their own articulation agreement with us. Our hope is to build a successful partnership with these companies, which will result in many more job opportunities in the future.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be this winter.

Chairman's Column

Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh

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This month, I had the opportunity to attend the Annual Business Meeting along with Executive Director Donald Giancioppo and Deputy Compact Administrator Patricia Malone. Many issues impacting the states were discussed, and as a result of formal voting, several rules were adopted relative to the transfer of sex offenders across state lines. Although the operational challenges will be many, the intent of this rule, which will be effective January, 2008, is to provide further protection to both sending and receiving states and to increase communication among states.

In closing, it is important for all of us in the parole business to be aware of the Compact. Massachusetts is fortunate to have the leadership of our Deputy Compact Administrator, who in one short year, has established herself as a leader in this field. I am looking forward to strengthening this unit under the leadership of Patty Malone, and I welcome your thoughts on ways to improve. The Interstate Compact unit is staffed by Parole Supervisor Don LaFratta, Parole Officer Richard Vernick, Julie DiCenzo and Victim Service Coordinator Dena Coffey. It is a great team that always gets the job done.

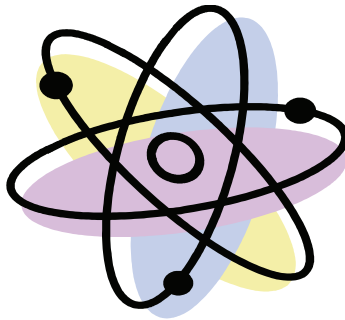
Compas Risk and Needs Assessment Project

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identify problems with the Compas Program and tailor this tool to meet our needs.

On September 12th, those who participated in the June training returned for a web-ex demonstration of the Re-entry Compas Questionnaire.

The re-entry component is a new Northpointe product which has recently been completed and is the tool that focuses on the community component of the offender's sentence. Northpointe staff and Parole Staff identified terminology in the Reentry Questionnaire that will need to be changed in order to make the questionnaire reflect the appropriate terminology utilized in the Massachusetts Criminal Justice system. Staff exchanged ideas and areas of concern in order to make the upcoming Pilot Program at the Region Six Office a success.



A committee has been established comprised of staff from all facets of the Parole Board. Over the next few months, the committee will be continuing to achieve the Board's vision for full implementation the Compas Risk and Needs Assessment Tool. To gain the maximum benefits

of the Compas Risk and Needs Assessment staff will continue coordinate and exchange ideas with the Department of Correction and Northpointe. The Re-entry Compas Pilot Program in the Region Six office should demonstrate a seamless continuum in risk/needs assessment from initial incarceration to the Parole Hearing process to parole release to the community and any return to

custody as a parole violator. A valuable evidence based risk and needs assessment will be incorporated soon as a valuable tool to enhance the Parole Board business practice.

Parole Board's Transitional Housing Program Places 1,000 client

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Bedford provide substance abuse treatment, counseling and life skills training. The Boston Rescue Mission and McGrath House both located in Boston provide the same services for female parolees.

Parolees unable to secure a home plan and "wrapped up" ex-offenders are able to access sober beds at Brooke House in Boston, Foundation House in Springfield (run by the Hampden County Sheriff's Office) and, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) with beds in Framingham, Worcester, and the North Shore region.

This new program opened up over 100 beds that cycle over after 4 months, streamlining and centralizing the process of placements. By utilizing the data available by the Massachusetts Parole Board, vendors are able to get timely and accurate background information. The program also allowed Parole to get priority placements by contracting for these beds. Normally, most residential program have waiting lists that span several months for an open bed, VOI/TIS cut the wait time in some instances to days.

Although sober beds enjoy shorter waiting lists, most charge residents a monthly fee. However, the VOI/TIS grant allowed most clients to access the beds for up to four months at minimal to no cost. This is done so parolees and ex-offenders can save their income to use toward permanent housing, therefore eliminating one of the road blocks to successful reintegration.

In 2006, federal funding of VOI/TIS expired however lawmakers on both sides of the aisle at the statehouse noted the success of the program and approved funding in the state budget. The housing program is now called the Transitional Housing Program (THP) and actually now has a larger budget than the federally funded VOI/TIS grant. With the increased funding, the Parole Board authorized additional treatment beds with the addition of Rehabilitation and Health Clinic in East Boston and the Almost Home Program, on the grounds of the Worcester County Sheriff's Office.

Acknowledging a growing problem of female parolees with severe mental health issues, the Parole Board funded additional beds with the Boston Rescue Mission to serve this population. With the Parole Board implement-

ing a new graduated sanctions policy, existing "halfway back" beds were funded at North Cottage.

Now in its third year, the Parole Board's has placed over 1,000 individuals including several with another new partner, The Franklin Medical Center, which operates the Beacon House for Men and Women in Greenfield and the Orange Recovery Home in Orange filling the void of access to treatment beds in Western Massachusetts.

Back in July 2007 at the Parole Board's annual housing conference, Research Analyst Stephanie Coughlin presented THP vendors with encouraging data. Among the highlights;

- Compared to national averages of over 50% recidivism rates, 29% of THP clients had been rearrested on a new charge and only 14% had a new incarceration (Parole Board figures include technical violations).
- From intake to discharge, THP clients enjoyed a 31% increase in employment.
- 66% of clients had obtained sustainable housing upon discharge.

Confirming that programming works in re-integrating a parolee, data showed that recidivism rates dropped for THP clients who completed the program (13%) as opposed to THP clients who discharged negatively (26%).

Elizabeth L. Curtin, Department Director for Community Resources for Justice, which runs Brooke and McGrath House reflected back to the start of the program, "In 2005, we at Community Resources for Justice (CRJ) were thrilled to hear that the Parole Board was embarking on a new initiative to provide transitional housing beds for parolees. Our experience with Parole has been one of a true collaboration as we both struggle with the challenges of reentry for our clients. We applaud the leadership of Parole and the dedication of those in the Reentry Unit for their commitment to the Transitional Housing Program and to the providers across the state. As Parole prepares to welcome the 1,000th client to this valuable program, we pledge to continue to work together to make substantive changes in the lives we touch."